⚡W1TKZ⚡

The Spark Gap

September 1989

Not Available at Newsstands

**Official Journal
of the
Wellesley Amateur Radio Society**

President's Message

by Tom Kinahan, N1CPE

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As you know, the club election was held in July; I want to thank all of you for returning me to office. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank outgoing club officers Rita Baker (N1DDI), Roger Smith (W1EOA), and David Kent (N2AWG) for their service to the club. Finally, I would like to say "welcome aboard" to incoming vice president Vern Valero (ND1Z and former operations chairman), recording-secretary Dave Bush (KC1PR, ex-KA1RWK), fundraising chairman Jerry Driscoll (NV1T), and operations chairman Denis Guillemette (KA1SAR). I look forward to another banner year with them and the two reelected officers, corresponding-secretary Kathy Pate (KA1IYR) and treasurer Charles J. "Mac" McDonald (WB1BUM).

In case you missed it, the ARRL board has approved a petition to the FCC, asking that another class of license—Communicator—be added. This license would require only written examinations, equivalent to the present Novice and Technician exams, except that some written CW questions would be included.

We have talked about proposals like this before, but at the June 21 meeting, I heard a lot of new ideas from many of you, and sensed some strongly held views from some members who have been silent in the past. I would like to see everyone's opinion of the proposed new Communicator license, and other topics that interest you, in The Spark Gap. Jot down a few words and send them to Art Anderson at the address on page 3, or bring them to the next meeting.

Paul Monroe, KA1LDV, SK

The club mourns the death of Paul Monroe, KA1LDV, in June. Paul had been a member of the Society for many years, and, as a

Meetings

All meetings are onThursdays at 7:30 p.m.

September 7
September 21
October 5
October 19

211 Washington Street, Wellesley

salesman at You-Do-It Electronics in Needham, always had a minute for people interested in ham radio. Paul died doing what he loved most, with the W1TKZ contest crew on Mt. Equinox, Vermont. He will be sorely missed.

New Call Signs

The following members have received new call signs:

Dave Bush	KC1PR
Elaine Chase	N1GTB
Charlie Spooner	N1GSM

Officers

President:
Tom Kinahan, N1CPE 508/ 877-3456

Vice President:
Vern Valero, ND1Z 508/ 533-6822

Treasurer:
C. J. McDonald, WB1BUM
617/ 332-6091

Recording Secretary:
Dave Bush, KC1PR 617/ 944-7025

Corresponding Secretary:
Kathy Pate, KA1IYR 508/ 785-1801

Fundraising Chairman:
Jerry Driscoll, NV1T 617/444-2686

Operations Chairman:
Denis Guillemette, KA1SAR
617/739-5170

Tragedy at Equinox

Paul Monroe's sudden death Friday evening before the VHF Contest left the W1TKZ crew with no spirit to carry on. The day had been plagued anyway with minor mishaps and atrocious weather.

The promised two hotel rooms turned out to be only one, and the rain, wind, and cold on the summit made camping out (and setting up) impossible. By Saturday morning, all but two had left for home. Art Holmes, WA2TIF, and Art Anderson, NT1M, agreed to stay to help with the Vintage Sports Car Club's hillclimb.

After Saturday's races, the two Arts, lacking towers and amplifiers, lashed Holmes' 432 MHz Yagi to a signpost in the parking lot at the summit, borrowed a rig from Dick Paret, WA1ZLG, and got on the air. The antenna was rotated by hand and held more or less in place with light ropes. Most contacts were CW because of the low power (25 watts out). After assisting with Sunday's hillclimb, they got back into the contest for the rest of the day — and turned in a respectable score, considering the equipment: 75 QSOs and 37 grid squares (432 MHz only).

We will try to redeem our good name at the Fall contest, also from Mt. Equinox, on September 9 and 10. Please tell Tom, N1CPE, if you would like to come.

Field Day

by Tom Kinahan, N1CPE

Field Day, June 24-25, was a great success again this year. We operated as usual from the Sprague School. The high point of this year's operation, literally, was the balloon vertical antenna launched by Denis, KA1SAR.

The Spark Gap
Official Journal of the Wellesley Amateur Radio Society

Editor:
Arthur W. Anderson, NT1M
P. O. Box 9009
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02181
617/ 449-0556

The Spark Gap is published monthly, except July and August, by the Wellesley Amateur Radio Society. The Society hereby grants permission for reprinting any articles from The Spark Gap, provided only that the author and this newspaper are credited.

The Society's purpose is to encourage participation in amateur radio. Membership is open to all radio amateurs; dues are $15 per year (September through August). Meetings of the Society are held on the first and third Thursdays of each month. The Society conducts classes for those intending to take FCC license examinations, and examination sessions four times a year. For more information please write to the editor, or to the Society:

The Wellesley Amateur Radio Society
211 Washington Street
Wellesley, Massachusetts 02181

Other antennas included the club's triband-er and Ringo Ranger, Dave Bush's 10m monobander and 2m boomer, the club's 6m beam, and dipoles on 80m and 40m. Pavilions were provided by Elaine Chase (N1GTB, ex-KA1SAO) and Dick Seeg (SO0N). Dick also shot a roll of snappy photographs, some of which appear in this issue.

N1EHM brought his camper-trailer for the convenience of those staying the night, and a host of stations were on the site.

Again this year, we had to contend with soccer matches, but they were not a major problem and they did bring a lot of spectators interested in what we were doing. We did our best to explain. John Muldoon, of the Wellesley *Townsman*, paid us a visit, and later wrote a nice piece about us for his paper.

Those present (as noted on this reporter's pad) were: ND1Z, KA1IU, KB1PA, KA1SAR, WA1YDL, N1FWI, N1FWJ, N1FUP, W1UQC, KA1QIY, NV1T, KA1NML, N1FCR, N1FGO, WA2TIF, KC1PR, N1FME, N1EHM, N1EHI, N1BAN, N1ADY, K1UR, N1FXG, W1TUG, WA1EVD, WB1BUM, KA1DHV, N1GJQ, KA1TOU, KA1TOW, N2AWG, KA1TQA, W1EOA, W1LMU, KA1FSB; and N1CPE was hiding in the weeds somewhere.

Results were as follows:

Band	Mode	QSOs	Antenna
160	phone	3	Balloon vertical
80	CW	16	" "
75	phone	77	" "
40	CW	79	Dipole
40	phone	127	"
20	CW	12	Triband
20	phone	138	"
15	phone	18	Dipole
10	phone	70	3-element monoband
6	phone	1	6-element monoband
2	CW	10	Vertical (10 watts)
2	phone	14	Boomer at 35 feet
2	phone	5	Handheld with solar power
Total	phone:	525	
	CW:	118	
		643	

Message Fair

by Tom Kinahan, N1CPE

On Tuesday, July Fourth, while most of the country was soaking up the sun or otherwise having fun, WARS members ND1Z, N1FUP, NT1L, KA1TOW, KC1PR, W1LMU, and N1CPE were advancing the cause of amateur radio at the Boston National Historic Park, in Charlestown. The operation was set

up as a message fair, with the standard message being "ARL FIFTY-ONE THE USS CONSTITUTION", or, in English,

> Greetings by amateur radio. This message is sent as a free public service by ham radio operators here at the USS Constitution. Am having a wonderful time.

Lots of people asked how it all worked; some couldn't understand why we wanted to spend our day off doing this; and others knew pretty well what ham radio was. Most of the visitors were from out of town, which is what we really want. A few locals sent messages to neighbors. One group, from an "Outward Bound"-type sailing tour for the Summer, appreciated the chance to send messages home.

Surprisingly, there were no requests for international traffic. In previous operations, we were asked to send messages home to places like El Salvador, Korea, or Israel (which we did, where we were allowed to do so).

We are always curious, as are all originators of third-party traffic, to find how things are getting through. All messages were sent with handling code "HXG", which means "Don't spend money delivering but reply to sender if undeliverable." At this writing, we have received only two replies: one typo and one wrong telephone number given by the visitor.

The operation was all-packet, with nearby Jack Callahan, N1BGG, giving us use of his packet BBS for the event. We operated three stations, on 145.01, 145.05, and 145.07 MHz, sending messages through N1BGG for automatic forwarding all over the country. All stations used the club call, W1TKZ. In all, we sent 106 messages.

Tech/General Class

The Wellesley Amateur Radio Society is offering a course for those hams wanting to upgrade to Technician or General. All Novices, Technicians, and prospective hams are welcome.

The course, which is under the direction of Roger Tobin, N1EYZ, will start in late September. It will concentrate on the theory for the written examinations, and on code practice.

The exact dates for the course will be announced soon in local stores and on repeater nets. Classes will meet at the Wellesley Red Cross building (211 Washington Street).

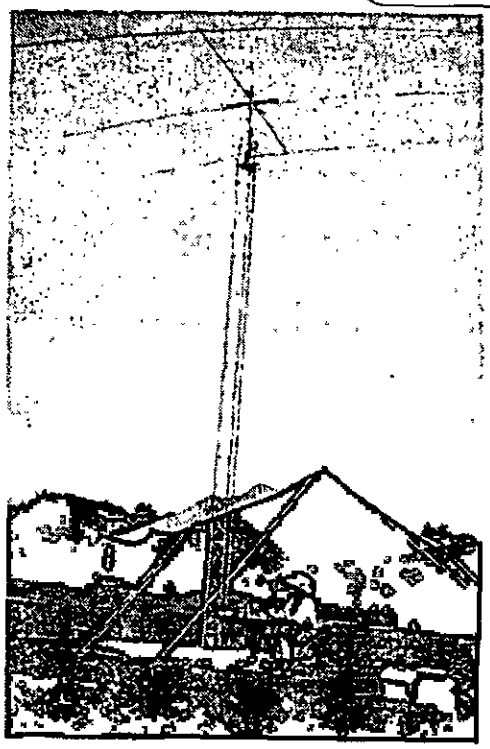
For more information, contact Roger at 508/524-4044 during the evening.

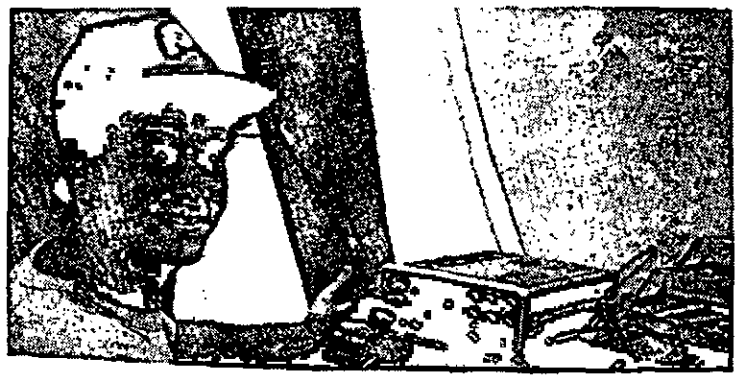
SEMARA Hamfest

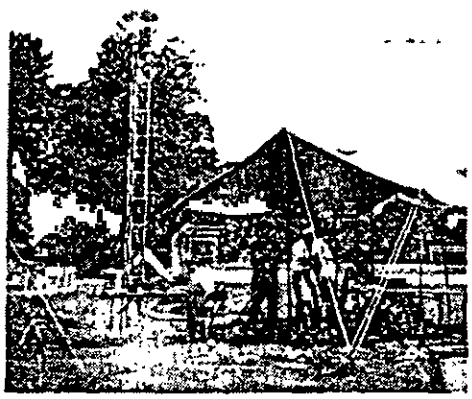
The Southeastern Massachusetts ARA will hold a hamfest in South Dartmouth on September 10. Admission is free, but sellers must "donate" $5 in advance or $8 that day. No exams this year. Talk-in is on 147.000 MHz. For more information, send a SASE to SEMARA Hamfest, Box P-105, South Dartmouth MA 02748.

WARS Field Day 1989

Photos by Dick Seeg







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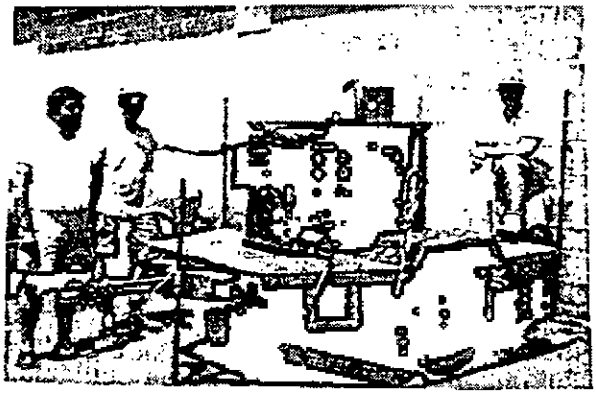

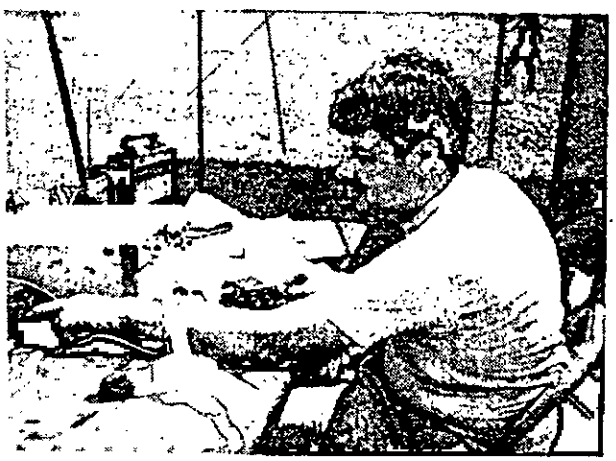

No-Code Proposal — A Race with Time?

by Denis Guillemette, KA1SAR

The present Morse-code controversy is important for several reasons. First, it has historical significance because knowledge of Morse code has been with amateur radio since its inception. Second, it raises fundamental questions about ham radio. If not Morse code, what should be required for an amateur license? Is it important to attract more people to the hobby, and if so how many is enough? Why do people become hams? What do we want amateur radio to be?

Many opponents of the code requirement think that if amateur radio continues to stagnate, we will lose more frequency spectrum, as has happened with the recent reallocation of the 220 MHz band. They argue that the only way to stop this erosion is to increase our numbers. Some of them argue that the code is antiquated, and a waste of time; it is a skill they will neither use nor need, and requiring mastery of it is repelling prospective Novices.

Defenders of the code requirement usually see no-code proposals threatening a decline in standards. Often, they question whether we ought to defend frequencies that are rarely used. Some worry about possible chaos from increased numbers of ill-qualified hams, and an over burdened FCC unable to manage.

In the last chapter of *200 Meters and Down*, by Clinton DeSoto, the author noted that hams fell, at that time (1936), into two categories: those interested primarily in the experimental or technical aspects of radio, and those interested more in communication. Technical skills were more important in those days, because radios had to be built instead of bought. The home-brew rigs were primitive by today's standards and mostly used CW. Operators were therefore required to have sophisticated communication skills — the ability to use Morse code, for example. It seems to me that the skill required to do something is inversely proportional to the hardware at one's disposal. For example, if one wants to send a 1,000-word message in Morse code, he must have considerable skill, but his radio can be simple. To send the same message by packet radio requires much less skill, but a more sophisticated station. I conclude that the amateur of the 1930's must have possessed greater skills than his counterpart today, both in understanding equipment and in communications.

Today, few hams can build or fix their own radios; the technical skills once required of hams has gone — quietly and without a fight. To me, it is sad that these skills, once the hallmark of radio amateurs, have practically disappeared. FCC examination of technical subjects has eased the demise of technical ability among hams: the tests are now multiple-choice, and can easily be passed by rote memorization; they do not require deep understanding of the subject matter.

As more sophisticated equipment has rendered technical knowledge less important than in the past, it has also lessened our reliance on our other distinguishing skill, the ability to communicate in Morse code. But whereas it is easy to lower the standards of technical examinations, where competence is multifaceted and more difficult to test, code tests are as difficult now as in the 'thirties. If the no-code proponents succeed in eliminating these tests, without replacing them with more stringent requirements in the written exams, we will get hams who know nothing and have no skills. That is the real danger of dropping the code requirement.

I believe that there should be two pathways into amateur radio: one strong in communications skills and on strong in technical skills. Also, I believe that the technical knowledge required of hams has been diluted, and needs to be strengthened. If we are to allow a technical route towards licensure, with no code requirement, it ought to demand the same level of skill as mastery of the code. This means requiring real knowledge of the technical subjects on the examinations.

As I have said, I do not believe our present multiple-choice examinations properly test understanding. One easy improvement would be *not* to publish the question-and-answer pool. Another improvement would be to give essay tests: have prospective hams solve schematic problems, or draw a diagram of a radio and explain how it works.

Listening to descriptions of the auto races at Mt. Equinox, I was reminded that racing has parallels in amateur radio. People who like Morse code are like those who enjoy running foot-races: they rely mostly on their skills and not much on equipment. Packet enthusiasts, by contrast, resemble racing-car drivers because the technology of their equipment is more important than the operator's skill. Should we require racing-car drivers to be good at running foot-races before we let them drive their Maseratis? Probably not, but we should require them to know something about cars before getting a license.

DX News

by Art Anderson, NT1M

George Tucker, WA5NVI, writes with more on the OY7ML piracy, mentioned in this column last April:

"I worked OY7ML on 24 November 1988 at 1159z on 21.034 MHz. However, it turned out to be the pirate, not Martin Hansen. The latter just returned my QSL stamped 'Pirate using my call' and added the following note (dated June 3): 'Still QRV as OY7ML, our FCC wouldn't let me have a new call, so forced to use OY7ML. The pirate is now using OY1B; he has been located to be near London.'"

Other pirates reported in the last few months: XX9GP, 3A0A, A51PN, PY5B1/ZP9.

PA0GAM has been operating /ST2 from Sudan for many months, and while we have tried several times, we have not made contact. But on 11 July (0206z, 14.024 MHz) we heard him calling CQ as PA0GAM/9L, and quickly bagged him — then looked up to see what country has prefix 9L. It turns out to be Sierra Leone, a small country on the west coast of Africa, adjacent to Liberia. We had the same luck with TL8RM from Central African Republic (04 Aug, 0305, 14.019 MHz). This country is just south of Chad and north of Zaire. We spent two fruitless evenings trying to get through the pileup to XT2CW (Burkina Faso, ex-Upper Volta); he was sending on 21.024 MHz and listening up as high as 21.032. TT8CW (Chad) is supposed to be a regular on 21.010 MHz at 1530z; we have not yet worked him but have heard him once or twice.

Two DXCC "countries" have changed prefixes recently. Micronesia changed from KC6 to V6, and Marshall Islands from KX6 to V7. And Burma (prefix XY) has changed its *name* to Mynamar. Its capital, Rangoon, is now called Yangon.

Bill Shipp, KC1AG, will lead a two-week DXpedition to Walvis Bay, using the call sign ZS1IS, beginning 26 August. Walvis Bay is a South African enclave in Namibia, for which an application (to the DX Advisory Committee of the ARRL) has been filed for

separate-country status. Walvis Bay is located at 22°59'S, 14°31'E, on the coast directly west of the Namibian capital, Windhoek.

Bouvet Island (3Y), in the South Atlantic at 54°26'S, 03°24'E, was last on the air in 1979, and is second only to Albania (ZA) on the DX Magazine's list of most wanted countries. A team of Norwegians plans a DXpedition there beginning 24 December. The estimated cost of the trip is $200,000, and the group is asking for donations from the ham community. Donations may be sent to Club Bouvet, Box 88, 1361 Billingstadsletta, Norway (if you contribute, they will put you on their mailing list).

KN0E/KH3 is on Johnston Island until mid-September. We worked him on 09 August at 0234z, 21.027 MHz listening up. Yes, Johnston Island is a separate "country"; it is located in the Central Pacific at 16°45'N, 169°32'W, and is owned (?) by the United States.

We scanned the DXCC listings in the August QST looking for WARS members, and found that Frank, NG1I, has received endorsement for 132 countries, mixed. If we missed anyone, please let us know. Your obediant servant now has 91 confirmed, and may yet blossom into a bonafide DXer.

For Sale

Drake R4B, T4XC, MS4, AC4. Complete station with crystals for all of 10m, 160m, and more. Call Roger, N1EYZ, at 508/ 524-4049 evenings.